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The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma. By HENRY ADAMS.
(New York: The Macmillan Company. 1919. Pp. 311.)

The complacent optimism of the last half century has been derived in no small part from the Darwinian implication that the vital powers of man "have risen from lower to higher by the spontaneous struggle of the organism for life" (p. 153). Upon this hypothesis, it has been easy to erect the dogma of indefinite progress toward betterment.

In his "Letter to American Teachers of History," which was privately circulated in 1910 and which makes up more than a third of the present volume, the late Henry Adams sought to beguile the attention of sociologists and historians from their fetich of evolution to a momentary contemplation of the second law of thermodynamics and some of its implications.

In order that work may be done energy must flow from higher to lower levels, as water does work when falling to sea level. The second law of thermodynamics, announced by Thomson—later Lord Kelvin—in 1852, points out in effect that all of nature's energies are slowly converting themselves into heat and vanishing into space, until at last nothing will be left except the dead ocean of energy at its lowest possible level and incapable of doing any work whatever (p. 145). In short, the universe is running down.

Adams has amplified his argument from the pages of astronomers, geologists, physicists, biologists, even psychologists and historians, until it would be a hardy or unveracious optimism that would not confess a qualm from its perusal. The sun is cooling, or what is more dismaying, maintains its heat only by cataclysmic condensations, and may be getting ready for one of these at this moment. Nor does the line which divides the organic from the inorganic arrest the universal process of the "degradation of energy" by its dissipation. The animal world expends the energy which the vegetable world draws from the sun by restoring it in the form of heat, which is straightway dissipated into cosmic space. True, with man there enters a new force, thought; but can thought reverse the dissipation of solar energy? As a matter of fact, man, though a late comer in a universe already well on the way to bankruptcy, has proved himself a most reckless spendthrift of the hoarded energies of eons. Besides, what is the significance of the appearance of thought regarded simply as a manifestation of vital energy? "All organisms," Mr. Adams answers, "would tend to develop nervous systems when dynamically ill-nour-

ished," so that "thought appears in nature as an arrested—in other words as a degraded—physical action" (pp. 242-243).

"History," says Mr. Adams, "can be written in one sense just as easily as in another." What vision of the historical process does the degradationist point of view yield? Mr. Adams's answer also hints another of his interests: "According to our western standards, the most intense phase of human energy occurred in the form of religious and artistic emotion, perhaps in the Crusades and Gothic churches, but since then, though vastly increased in apparent mass, human energy has lost intensity and continues to lose it with accelerated rapidity, as the Church proves. Organized in society, as a volume, it becomes a multiplied number of enfeebled units, on which, like the eye in insects, reason acts as an enormously multiplied lens, converging nature's lines of will, and taking direction from them, but adding nothing of its own" (p. 229).

From the same point of view also he quotes the following passage from Le Bon's volume on *Crowds*: "That which formed a people, a unity, a block, ends by becoming an agglomeration of individuals without cohesion, still held together for a time by its traditions and institutions. This is the phase when men, divided by their interests and aspirations, but no longer knowing how to govern themselves, ask to be directed in their smallest acts; and when the state exercises its absorbing influence. With the definitive loss of the old ideal, the race ends by entirely losing its soul; it becomes nothing more than a dust of isolated individuals, and returns to what it was at the start—a crowd" (p. 252). To the same effect is his approval of Eduard Meyer's dictum that "the whole mental development of mankind has, for its preliminary assumption, the existence of separate social groups" (p. 259). In a word, individualism has spelt dissipation of energy, degradation.

It is at this point that Mr. Brooks Adams takes up the story in his somewhat diverting pages on the "Heritage of Henry Adams" (pp. 1-122). The question he poses is, where lay the responsibility for the defeat of John Quincy Adams by Jackson in 1829? J. Q. Adams himself clearly held God responsible and would have made no bones about saying so had he not been deterred by his respect for his mother's feelings. Mr. Brooks Adams, however, with his brother's researches before him, now feels that it was the second law of thermodynamics which was to blame. So the decline of the Adams family is given its necessary cosmic setting.

Readers of this volume are advised to omit the essay at the end, entitled "The Rule of Phase Applied to History." Henry Adams had all the virtues of the great amateur—penetration, aloofness, style. It is sad to record that in the end he did not escape the pitfall of most amateurs. He began taking himself seriously, and that as a prophet!

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The Defensor Pacis of Marsiglio of Padua. By EPHRAIM EMERTON. (Harvard Theological Studies, Volume VIII. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pp. ii, 81.)

Professor Emerton has, within the compass of some eighty odd pages, given us the best extended summary in English of the political and ecclesiastical theories of Marsiglio of Padua. To the task which the author set for himself he brought a lifetime study of history, particularly along theological lines, and this has enabled him to make those frequent comparisons and illustrations which others less well schooled would find themselves unable to do. The pleasing style in which the study is written interests the reader in a subject which most scholars make dry and uninteresting. No excuse now ought to exist to justify the author's statement that "the name of Marsiglio is unknown to most persons outside the narrow circle of students of political theory."

Those students of the political theories and issues of our day, who seem to feel that all thought about the state that is worthy of consideration is to be studied only in works of the last half century, or perhaps a century earlier, would do well to get a copy of this small book, and learn what a fourteenth century Italian had to say about the powers of the people, their rulers, and relations to each other. To historians, who feel that the weighing of historical evidence is a nineteenth century invention, it will be of interest to see how such subjects as the Papal Supremacy, the Donation of Constantine, and others, are dealt with in an age when scientific historians were not supposed to exist.

It is not to be expected that within the confines of so small a volume every possible misunderstanding of the subject could be provided against. For example, there is an implication (p. 20) that Marsiglio disappeared from the scene of action much earlier than he actually did. Even Valois concedes that he wrote a tract on divorce in 1342,